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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 003401

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [IN](#) [NP](#) [UK](#)

SUBJECT: UK NEPAL ENVOYS: MEA HARD LINE ON THE KING

REF: NEW DELHI 3250

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) Summary: In a May 5 discussion with PolCouns and Emboffs, visiting UK Special Representative for Nepal Sir Jeffrey James, UK Ambassador to Nepal Keith Bloomfield, and UK Emboffs reported from their meeting with Foreign Secretary Saran that MEA Nepal policy vis-a-vis the King is hardening following backsliding after his April 23 meeting with the Indian PM. The UK suggested that increased US-UK-India operational cooperation may help to disrupt Maoist activity, and that the GOI may be ready to consider previously unthinkable ideas to end the turmoil in Nepal, including UN peacekeepers. End Summary.

Saran: Don't Go Wobbly

2. (C) According to the UK visitors, who were meeting in Delhi with both GOI and non-governmental experts, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and Joint Secretary (North) Ranjit Rae

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were unyielding in their opposition to rewarding King Gyanendra for the lifting of the state of emergency (SOE) in a May 4 meeting. The MEA believes the monarch is responding to the pressure of the international arms supply suspension, albeit slowly. The Brits reported that the re-arrest of former PM Deuba indicated to the GOI that the King thought he had won over the Indians by saying the right things in Jakarta, and South Block wants to withhold any conciliatory gestures until the Palace takes more permanent steps to reverse the February 1 takeover. Now is not the time to go soft and make concessions when the pressure is giving results, Saran reportedly said. The MEA, which has prevailed over those in the Indian military who want to resume military supplies, sees a return to normal relations as still a long way off.

3. (C) The two envoys commented that the King is feeling more pressure from his desire for international legitimacy than from the military effects of the suspension of assistance. The UK and GOI agreed that the RNA is not yet feeling any real pinch from the arms supply cutoff, and that RNA protestations of dire shortfalls are intended to frighten New Delhi into giving in before the Palace takes any major steps. The British thought the focus of the GOI, HMG, and USG should instead be on "putting the Maoists out of business," rather than trying to build up the RNA. The recent split in the Maoist Politburo has put them off balance and weakened their leadership, but the democratic forces in Nepal are unfortunately not in any position to take advantage of this, the UK envoys stated.

Full Efforts Against the Maoists?

4. (C) The British visitors suggested that the GOI could be more aggressive in acting against Maoist leaders and assets in India, but worried that New Delhi had not given strong orders to the Indian police and intelligence services to act against them. PolCouns noted that NSA MK Narayanan had indicated that he was attentive to the problem of Maoists in India, but the UK representatives questioned whether that message was filtering down to operational levels.

Where Is This Heading?

5. (C) Asked by PolCouns whether the GOI had given any sense of their plans vis-a-vis the crisis, the two envoys described Saran as more focused than previously on the long-term view. His immediate concern over the risk of losing influence in Nepal to China or Pakistan had given way to a more strategic consideration of what will work in Nepal to reverse the royal power grab. In this regard, they reported, he seemed impatient that the current GOI approach was not working and was even pondering previously unthinkable ideas, including an eventual deployment of UN peacekeepers to separate the forces and restore conditions for democracy. "What we've done up to now isn't working" to forge a long-term solution, Saran reportedly commented. (Comment: We are dubious that the GOI would admit to a UN role in Nepal, but note that this issue did figure in the recent visit of UNSYG Kofi Annan. End Comment)

16. (C) Discussing the efforts to schedule a trilateral US-UK-India meeting during the upcoming visit of A/S Rocca, the UK representatives reported Saran's comment that "we're not ready for that yet." They speculated that entrenched bureaucratic divisions within the MEA are the biggest obstacle to holding formal three-way consultations, adding that the idea was too foreign to offices accustomed to strictly bilateral interactions.
Comment

17. (C) The MEA considers the Deuba arrest as a slap in the face of PM Manmohan Singh, and has dug in its heels against rewarding the King for partial progress towards democracy. As A/S Rocca prepares for her meeting with J/S Rae on May 9, we expect the MEA to take a tough line on Nepal and to push for a continuation of the suspension of all forms of military assistance.
BLAKE